



Stephen J Lawrence
Director Animal Services and Enforcement

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September 6, 2016

The Honorable Lee Chatfield
Chair House Local Government Committee
Anderson House Office Building
Post Office Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Chairman Chatfield:

My name is Stephen Lawrence and I am the Director of the Kalamazoo County Animal Services and Enforcement. I have been the Director here for 14 years. I have witnessed serious aggression from almost every breed of dog one can imagine. In almost every case, the aggression is not a product of canine genetics, but a result of irresponsible animal ownership. Abusing animals, training them to be aggressive, leaving them on chains and providing little to no socialization, allowing them to roam free without supervision, not providing proper veterinary care when needed, all are building blocks to an aggressive animal and a danger to a community.

I am writing to ask for your support of Senate Bill 239. I would like you to vote for the bill in the House Local Government Committee, on the House floor, and encourage your colleagues to do the same. The bill has already passed the Senate with overwhelming, bipartisan vote. It is my understanding that a hearing on the bill is scheduled for September 7, 2016 before your committee.

SB 239 would prohibit local units of government from arbitrarily creating ordinances that infringe upon personal property rights – more specifically, what breed of dog an individual can own.

Opponents will also tell you that Senate Bill 239 eliminates local control. The truth is that local units of government have, and should, work to pass ordinances that hold the owner of any pet responsible for the conduct of that pet – *regardless of breed*. Further, breed specific ordinances require local units of government, already strapped for money, to dedicate resources to enforcement. This is unnecessarily onerous and is undoubtedly ineffective. As the Director of a larger County Animal Control, I can testify to the burden that such breed specific laws would put on our daily workloads. Determining if a dog is a specific breed or not is not as easy as one would think. What about the mixed breed? How much of the offending breed is too much or not enough? Where does the jurisdiction enforcing the ban begin or end? One side of the street? Both sides? A law-abiding citizen walking a well-trained dog could inadvertently cross one local unit boundary and enter another – unknowingly commit a crime, be fined, and have their dog seized or worse.

Simply put – breed specific ordinances at the local level are ineffective, costly, and distract from where true attention and resources should be focused, on the enforcement of laws and ordinances that hold pet owners accountable for the pet's behavior – regardless of breed.

Thank you, and again – please support SB 239.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen J. Lawrence". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Stephen J Lawrence